

## National STS Systemic Problems

- a. Providers do not make sufficient profit to motivate them to recruit large numbers of new users.
- b. An extremely small proportion of potential users have been identified and taught to use STS.
- c. No proven STS outreach technique has been developed.
- d. Many new STS CAs lack previous training or experience working with people with speech disabilities. They rely extensively on the consumers to train them after they begin to take calls. If all CAs were qualified speech language pathologists, they could “hit the ground running” and be of optimum service to consumers immediately upon employment.
- e. Each state is developing service protocols for very small numbers of STS consumers. This is extremely inefficient. A national service would have the resources to develop much more well thought out protocols.
- f. There are not enough STS consumer leaders in most states to provide leadership for a consumer driven service. The deaf community has enough leaders in each state to do that, while we do not.
- g. Not enough STS CAs are congregated in one place so that they can learn from each other to improve the service that they provide consumers.
- h. One provider reports significant abuse of STS by people without speech disabilities. That provider is unable to terminate such abuse under current FCC rules.
- i. The current system does not provide for monitoring national call volumes. That makes it impossible to monitor the effect of outreach. Well monitored call volumes could measure the proportion of consumers who are using STS and the degree to which information about the service was readily available to potential consumers.
- j. Many STS CAs work on both the TTY and STS side of their call center. If all STS CAs worked only on the STS side, they could develop a greater understanding of STS and a greater commitment to STS.
- k. I have received scattered reports over the years about STS CAs not taking their responsibilities for confidentiality seriously. A former STS CA recently released confidential consumer information on the STS list serve and by doing that gave the impression that his call center does not take confidentiality seriously. If all STS CAs were in one call center, the center administrator might be better able to develop a culture in which confidentiality was taken seriously.

This is not a comprehensive list of the systemic problems with STS. I am not accusing any provider with wrong doing. Most of these problems result from the inability of those of us who designed the STS service to predict what difficulties would develop over time. My goal is for consumers to have the best service

possible and for the provider(s) to make sufficient profit so that they will be motivated to increase call volumes substantially.

Prepared by Bob Segalman, Ph. D.  
Founder of Speech-to-Speech